

SWEETWATER GOLD MINE, RANCH HOUSE
Forest Service Road 5S24
Sierra National Forest
Jerseydale vicinity
Mariposa County
California

HAER No. CA-2281-B

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service
Pacific West Regional Office
U.S. Department of Interior
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607

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SWEETWATER GOLD MINE

RANCH HOUSE

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Location: The ranch house for the Sweetwater Gold Mine is located on the west side of Forest Service Road 5S24, approximately 2.5 miles north of where 5S24 intersects with Mariposa County Road 118.

USGS 7.5 Quad: Feliciana Mountain
UTM: Zone: 11; 245480mE / 4162730 mN

Present Owner: Sierra National Forest, USDA Forest Service, 1600 Toolhouse Road, Fresno, California 93611.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The Sweetwater Gold Mine represents one of the best examples of a small gold mining site in California, and this building is associated with the serial mining activities of that mine. Constructed as a ranch house sometime around 1873, it served this purpose until about 1882. At that time, it became the residence of a mine operator, who occupied it from approximately 1882 to 1897. In 1897, the building was expanded and became a boarding house for mine workers. From the 1890s to 1933, these workers labored for several owners of the Sweetwater Gold Mine and used the building for domestic activities. In 1933, Ray Foster and his son Clyde Foster acquired this building as part of the Sweetwater Gold Mine operation. Early in the 1930s, they enlarged the building once again, and converted it back into a single residence. The building remained a single residence until approximately 1993.

Historian: Historian Anthony Godfrey of U.S. West Research, Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah prepared this document, and acted as the project manager and editor for the project in behalf of the U.S. Forest Service, Sierra National Forest. Photographer Clayton B. Fraser of Fraserdesign of Loveland, Colorado contributed the large-format photographs, as well as the site and floor plans for the project in behalf of the U.S. Forest Service, Sierra National Forest. The project was completed for the U.S. Forest Service, Sierra National Forest in April 2011.

Project Information: Between October 2000 and April 2001, the Forest Service, on behalf of the U.S. Government, acquired several structures through forfeiture of the mining claims of the Sweetwater Gold Mine on the Sierra National Forest California. At the time the Forest Service acquired the mine, eight buildings and structures associated

with Sweetwater Gold Mine were extant. They were listed as: (1) an ore processing mill, (2) assay office, (3) compressor house, (4) woodshed, (5) barracks/storehouse, (6) main cabin, (7) chicken coop, and (8) outhouse. In addition to these buildings and structures, mining-related equipment located on the claims include two free-standing stamp mills (moved to the site in the early 1980s), burned remains of a small sawmill, a narrow-gauge trestle, a mercury retort or concentrate roaster, settling tanks and engines related to ore processing, and hundreds of feet of pipeline, miscellaneous tools, hardware, and equipment scattered about the mine site. Physical remnants of mining activities also included an old mill-tailing pond; six or more open adits, and several collapsed or partially collapsed adits and waste rock piles. Forest Service road 5S24 bisects the Sweetwater Gold Mine site.

In 2002, an archeological survey of the Sweetwater Gold Mine was conducted (FS 05-15-51-678-H), which determined that the property was potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In 2008, Applied Earthworks, Inc. of Fresno, California determined that the Sweetwater Gold Mine was NRHP eligible under Criteria A, B, C and D. Thereafter, the Forest Service proposed reclamation for the Sweetwater Gold Mine that would have an adverse effect on the cultural resource. After consultation with the SHPO, the Forest Service entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the SHPO to mitigate any adverse effects to the property. This Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), produced in manufacturing/industrial site outline format, is one of the proposed mitigation measures.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History of Building:

1. Date of Construction: Circa 1873. In 1870, Charles Bogan sold the Sweetwater Gold Mine operation to James and David Malone. James H. Malone assumed full ownership until 1873. Apparently Malone focused on raising livestock instead of mining. In 1882, when Malone sold the property along with the nearby Sweetwater Gold Mine claim to James Grove, the tract of land was known as the Malone Ranch. It included a 7 or 8-acre tract of land enclosed by a post and slat fence that contained a ranch house, orchard, garden, and other unnamed improvements. This building started out with five rooms (pantry, kitchen, common living area, and two bedrooms) and was 30 feet long and 20 feet wide. Thereafter the building went through several transformations.

2. Architect/Engineer: Not known.

3. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Unknown.

4. Original Plans: No original drawings or floor plans for the ranch house exist. But based on architectural observations, over the years, the small cabin-like ranch house expanded into a more substantial structure. Originally, the building started out as a typical small vernacular ranch house resource of the 1870s. It was rectangular in shape

and stood approximately 30' long and 20' wide (see Floor Plan). The building had a gable roof and contained: a pantry (Room 3), kitchen (Room 4), common area (Room 5), and two bedrooms (Rooms 6 and 7). A narrow open porch (approximately four feet wide) covered the entire length of the south facade of the ranch house.

5. Alterations and Additions: In 1897, the building was enlarged into a boarding house. A total of 240 square feet were added to the eastern end of the building to accommodate two additional bedrooms (Rooms 8 and 9). The gable-ended roof was matched and extended to the east, and the open porch on the south side of the building was lengthened as well. A decorative bracket on the eastern end of the porch, as well as, short altered rafters, indicates the size of this original porch. Boarding houses were intended to house a number of workers. In a boarding house, workers often shared sleeping quarters, and the four bedrooms may have had multiple occupants in each. However, in a boarding house situation, workers usually consumed meals together, which were prepared in the building—in this case the kitchen.

In 1933, or thereabouts, the building was again altered and considerably modernized. Based on historic photographs taken circa 1932, the building was turned from a boarding house into a single residence for Ray Foster and his family. First, a 6' wide by 15' long side shed was added to the west end of the building. It was partitioned into two rooms. The southernmost room was a utilities room (Room 1). It contained a gas refrigerator, gas freezer, and gas water heater, which allowed the modernization of the adjoining kitchen. The northernmost room (Room 2) contained a shower. Second, a shed roof was extended out from the north side of the building to roof a 5' by 42' extension of the building. This building extension increased the size of the common area (Room 5) into a family living area, and expanded the two most northern bedrooms (Rooms 7 and 9) by providing them with closet and storage space (Rooms 10 and 11). Other interior features may have been considerably altered at this time as well, such as the addition of closet space for Rooms 6 and 8. At this time, the original narrow porch was extended to a width of 5 feet, 4 inches. It symmetrically matched the roofline over the shed extension of the northern wall.

B. Historical Context: For the historical context pertaining to the ranch house see the general historical context in CA-2281 pages 3-5, 9.

Part II. Site Information

A. General Description:

1. Character: The building is a one-story wood framed vernacular gable roofed building with little to no architectural detail.

The overall dimensions of the main rectangular section of the building including the front porch is 31' 9" x 42' 4" with a gross square footage of approximately 1,344 feet. The western end of the building has a small addition that measures 6' 2" x 15' 11" with a

gross square footage of approximately 96 feet. The square footage of the total building, including the addition, is approximately 1,440 feet. The central portion of the building rests on a foundation of stacked native stones. The west end of the building is supported by 6" x 6" posts (these dimensions vary), sitting on one or more native stones. The foundation of the small addition could not be determined. The porch rests on formed concrete piers.

The building is sheathed with board and batten of variable dimensions. All load-bearing walls are wood frame construction.

The ranch house has one porch, which projects from the entire length of the front facade of the main building. It covers the main entrance to the building, as well as a second doorway. The porch has a dimensional wood skirt along its length, along with wood steps that lead into the main entrance. Corrugated metal sheets cover the porch. The ranch house has no chimneys, however, there is evidence of a wood burning stove in the form of a stack that penetrates the roof on the north side of the building. The ranch house has two doorways. They are located on building's southern facade. At the western end of this facade, the first doorway, or main entrance, leads into the main living area. At the eastern end of this facade, a second doorway leads to a separate living quarters.

The ranch house has many windows in a variety of configurations. The ranch house's southern facade most likely had several double-hung sash windows that let light and air into various rooms, such as the pantry, main living area, and two bedrooms. The elements of the windows (rails, lintel, sill, trim and light configuration) could not be distinguished because of dilapidation, but were probably very basic. There is no evidence that shutters were present at any time. The building's eastern facade had two windows of similar construction that let light and air into two bedrooms. Along the ranch house's northern facade and going from east to west, there were at one time three small fixed pane windows (currently boarded up) of various sizes that let light into a closet, storage room, and bedroom, probably a band of fixed paned windows (currently boarded up) to let light into the main living area, and then paired double-hung sash windows for the kitchen area. The building's western facade most likely had one double-hung sash window to let air and light into the kitchen, and the small shed addition to the western facade had several fixed pane windows arranged to let light into the utility room and the shower.

The main section of the ranch house has a gable roof covered with corrugated metal sheets, and unfinished or open soffits on the gable ends. The ridge board on the eastern end of the building has a slight dip indicating where an addition to the building was made. There are also several shed roofs of similar construction and materials. The building has eaves that are trimmed with 1" x 4" fascia boards. There is no gutter system in place.

HAER measured drawings indicate the general layout of the building today (see Supplemental Material). The interior has been completely destroyed by vandals. Generally speaking, the final floor plan for the building included a main living area,

kitchen, pantry, utility room, shower, and four bedrooms with closet and storage areas. The walls and ceilings have no specific features, but were once insulated with newspapers dating to the 1890s. All walls were also once covered with cardboard paneling.

Available information indicates that a wood burning stove once heated the house, but later perhaps the house was heated by propane gas, which was also used for a water heater, refrigerator, and freezer. The original plumbing system was galvanized pipe, which brought spring water into the building.

The historic landscape around the building once contained several residential features, including nonnative plantings, rock walls and terraces, paths and trails, and fence lines. Nonnative plantings include a 100-foot long row of lilacs that divided the upper (west) and lower (east) terraces. A walnut tree stands at the south end of the lilac row. Sweet peas once filled the lower terrace. Iris and daffodils are scattered around the building's perimeter. Dry-laid rock walls form small retaining features that separate the various terraces, and there is a gateway and a pedestrian path from Forest Service Road 5S24 to the building. An access driveway from Forest Service Road 5S24 on the east of the building wraps around the north end of the building to provide vehicle entry.

One unique landscape feature is a monument to "Sweetwater Clyde" Foster approximately 20' to 25' south of the southwest corner of the south facade of the building. Made from a granite arrastra stone, it measures 2' 2.5" x 2' 3.5" and has a metal plate attached to its face which is engraved with the words:

Clyde T. Foster
Sweetwater Clyde
1911-2001

It wasn't the Gold
that he wanted
So much as just finding the Gold

Future miners as
this place you pass
Turn down an empty glass

At the time of the preparation of this document, next to the monument were several empty liquor bottles of various makes and a pair of empty workman boots.

Outbuildings associated with the building include a chicken coop of unknown age formed of poultry wire and a combination of milled and unmilled posts; a small wood-frame structure with corrugated metal siding and no foundation. Additionally, a wood-frame board and batten "two seater" outhouse also once existed west of the building, which had a half-moon cut-out design, and a cattle brand on the front facade with a circle surrounding a capital "N", but it has been destroyed by vandals.

2. Condition of Fabric: The ranch house is in fair to poor condition, due to natural deterioration of some of the siding, particularly on the north facade. The porch and the interior is in extremely poor condition because of a leaking roof and the majority of the windows are either boarded up or do not have glass panes because of vandalism.

B. Site Layout: The Sweetwater Gold Mine site is located on a series of terraces principally along the west side of Sweetwater Creek. The ranch house is the focus of the habitation area on an upper terrace (see Site Plan for the location of the ranch house). This habitation area also includes the shed, chicken coop, outhouse (in total ruin), gate and stepping stone pathway, clothes line, lilacs, and sweet pea field.

PART III. Sources Of Information

A. Primary and Secondary Sources: The essential knowledge for this section of this HAER study comes from two reports, which thoroughly explored available primary and secondary resources pertinent to the subject matter, including California mining journals, records at the Mariposa County Courthouse, and the California State Mining and Mineral Museum in Mariposa, California, and personal interviews, and video-taped interviews with Bud Munck. They are:

Mogge, Marie and Connie Popelish. "Archeological Site Record for the Sweetwater Mine." On file, Sierra National Forest, Clovis, California: 2003.

Nettles, Wendy M., Randy Baloian, Barry A. Price, and Mark Kile. National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Evaluation of the Sweetwater Gold Mine in Mariposa County, California. Prepared U.S. Forest Service, Sierra National Forest. Applied Earthworks, Inc., Fresno, California: 2008.

B. Secondary Sources: Secondary sources consulted for this report include the following:

California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS). A Historical Context and Archaeological Research Design for Mining Properties in California. Sacramento, California: 2008.

Godfrey, Anthony. Historic Preservation Plan Placer and Hard Rock Mining Resources in Montana. 3 Volumes. Prepared for Bureau of Land Management, Montana, Purchase Order ESP000053. U.S. West Research, Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah: 2003.

Godfrey, Anthony. Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Resources on the White River National Forest. 3 Volumes. Prepared for U.S. Forest Service, White River National Forest, Contract #AG-82D7-P-07-0052. U.S. West Research, Inc., Salt Lake City, Utah: 2009.

Twitty, Eric. Riches to Rust: A Guide to Mining in the Old West. Montrose, Colorado; Western Reflections Publishing Company.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Very little is known about simpler, mundane boarding houses in terms of architecture, economics, and social themes. Residences, especially boarding houses, were microcosms of important economic and domestic activity, and architecturally, they reflect the adaptation of local building materials or standing structures, to the needs of workers. The workers consumed food and other domestic goods purchased from a variety of sources. Preserved food was shipped from packing houses on the West Coast, while fresh foods had to come from nearby farms and ranches. By consuming preserved and fresh foods, employees not only supported a complex national food transportation network, but they also helped the development of farming and ranching in California. Merchants in nearby towns handled most of the food and goods, and the acquisition of such therefore contributed to the local economy. Another important area of significance attributed to worker's housing involved social themes between individuals and the outside world. They were also the place of cultural, traditions, and diffusion, and places where workers could attend to the necessities of life outside the workplace. Finally, these small boarding houses might also bring light to social themes related to family and gender studies. Taken in conjunction with an analysis of the domestic dumps associated with the Sweetwater Gold Mine, historical archeology might be conducted here with profitability.

Additionally, oral histories should be conducted with local informants. They may provide critical information to this discussion as well. Many folks in the local community knew Clyde Foster well when he was alive, and could shed light on how his house was used. The residence was apparently quite the gathering place for social events such as parties, weddings, school tours, mine tours, etc. For instance, Clyde Foster's 4th of July parties with homemade "Applejack" and exploding fireworks made from mine chemical concoctions were considered quite the local attraction. It is also rumored that there was a connection between Clyde Foster and the Colorado School of Mines, Golden, Colorado, where students would come work for him in the mine and gain experience. If true, the residence might have been a "school" of sorts as well.



